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The wet garment is then pounded on a stone or soused up and down in the water a few times, and that is about all the laundering it gets. White jackets are washed out with soap and, in the towns, are given to the Indian washermen ("dhobies") for proper "doing up." 296

For protection from the rain the Karen use the wide-spreading fronds of the palm, which are nature's models for the paper umbrellas of the Chinese and Burmese. Workers in the paddy-fields make raincoats out of thatch woven on flexible bark fibre stays, which they tie across their shoulders. Three or four layers of the thatch make a protection that reaches to the knees. For a hat they tie a bit of palm leaf over the head, or wear a round umbrella-shaped hat like those made by the Shan and Burmese out of the sheathes of the cocoanut-palm or of bamboo. While transplanting rice on the plains a rain cover is made of these same sheathes or of tough large leaves covered with a network of thin bamboo splints bound with rattan. These covers are scoop-shaped and hang from the head down the back, causing a company of cultivators, bent over their work while wearing them, to look like long-legged tortoises wading in the mud. 292 287

Every Karen carries a bag ("hteu") slung over his shoulder as a part of his outfit. It is his pocket, in which he carries everything from money to the small game he has shot. The bag is woven in two parts. One, which forms the straps, consists of a strip from four to six inches wide and five or six feet long. Both ends are fringed. The other piece is from six to eight inches wide and from two to three feet in length. Each end of the long piece is folded lengthwise in the middle and sewed together, thus forming the corners of the bag. The short piece is folded crosswise in the middle and sewed to these corners or ends, thus forming the sides of the bag. The hemmed ends of the short piece form the edges of the mouth of the bag. The cloth woven for these bags is usually red with lengthwise stripes of white, yellow, or black. Different tribes have their different patterns and shades of color. The Karen do not ornament their bags so highly as do the Kachin tribes in Upper Burma. 415 286 301

Every Karen woman and girl has some sort of a necklace. It may be a few seeds of the Job's Tears strung together, or some glass beads purchased from wandering peddlers, or silver beads made by Burmese silversmiths who visit the Karen villages during the dry season to pick up odd jobs. A common variety of beads is 301

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no reference to the object of the call. This whole procedure illustrates not only a Karen, but also an Oriental, trait of character. The Oriental deals in indirect methods, rather than run the risk of saying something disagreeable. 584

Realising that his mission is not in vain, the intermediary enters the house of the prospective bride's parents in joyous mood, fairly shouting the Karen version of "tra-la-la," which is "traw-le, wa-le, ho-o-o." They sit down and discuss the matter. Then the parents kill a fowl or a pig, and the guest stays for dinner in token that the bargain is sealed. After the date for the wedding-feast has been set, the intermediary returns to the young man's family and reports his success. As a rule the time of the feast is fixed by the maiden's parents, but it is sometimes determined by the youth's family.

The only month that is tabu for wedding-feasts is "La plü" (December). This is the month when the moon is most often eclipsed (swallowed by the dogs). To many the month seems as though it were killed and is, therefore, regarded as inauspicious for new life. Others say that it is the month when neither birds nor animals mate, and that it is unwise for men to undertake to start a new household. The favorite months for marriages are March and April in the dry season, because the harvest is past, the weather is good, and there is plenty to eat and drink. The date of the wedding must fall during the waxing of the moon, which augurs an increasing family. This important point being settled, the prospective bride busies herself less with the preparation of her own trousseau than with the weaving of a set of new garments for her future husband, including a white turban, a white blanket with a red stripe running through it lengthwise, and, in the olden days, a "hse plo" or single smock. The maiden's family prepare the rice, fish-paste, pork, and liquor for the feast. The prospective groom has only to make for himself a horn to be blown at the festivities. On the plains and in those places in the hills where each family has its separate house, a booth or "k'la pyeh" is built close at hand for the wedding-feasts.[4] This structure must be so placed as to have its entrance towards the tail of the "p'yo" or great dragon of the Karens. Not long ago I saw such a booth, which was enclosed on three sides and had a small open entrance to the east. The south side was entirely open. Access to the structure was had

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[4] This booth is often called a "mandat." The name, "k'la pyeh," is from the Burmese. Perhaps the booth itself is of Burmese origin, but I do not know.

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585 halt the young men and instruct them in the proprieties of the ap-
273 proaching occasion, reminding them that they are going to a strange village where they will be entertained as guests. The hosts will serve them with rice and spirits. The elders remind them that the rice liquor that will be provided has been twice boiled and would intoxicate a horse or an elephant. They, therefore, advise moderation, telling them also not to hear any evil that may be spoken of them, to remain seated though others stand, to continue reclining though others sit up, to answer mildly though others speak roughly, and not to strike back should others slap them in the face. The elders require the company to say definitely that they will remember their advice, whereupon each one breaks a twig from a tree to be placed in a pile on the ground in token of the promise of all to conduct themselves properly and keep the peace.

585 A few years ago I visited a village in the Pegu Yomas at the time of a wedding. In the room of the bride's family they were preparing quantities of rice and curries. However, no liquor was in evidence. The bride herself was busy carrying water almost to the moment that the horns sounded at the village gate. The new clothing for the groom was resting upon the beam over the door. Now and again the horns and gongs could be heard in the distance. A party arriving from a village to the north waited outside the gate, in order to avoid the impropriety of preceding the groom's party, which was coming from across the valley, as the sounds reaching us from time to time from that direction informed us. As the groom's retinue ascended the hill, the waiting delegation hailed them with the din of their instruments, the other crowd giving vent in response with a volume of noise that showed them to be still unexhausted by the ascending of the hill. Brief intervals of silence followed by intermittent shouts and blasts of the horns indicated that the groom and his party were being welcomed by the elders.

585 As the procession again moved forward, we could catch
292 glimpses of the red-bordered smocks or "hse plos" of the men. On their nearer approach we could see the elders in the lead, followed by the married women and after them the groom attended by his party of young men. They now advanced along the narrow paths by twos and threes with their arms around each other, jumping and frolicing as they came. The bright colors of their costumes were accentuated by the bright red bags slung over their shoulders and the long tassels hanging from these. The large silver earrings adorned the lobes of their ears, which were further decorated by

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bits of red and yellow wool or by beads. The women wore heavily beaded smocks above their richly colored skirts, numerous chains of silver and glass beads, and red and white turbans. Meanwhile, the horns were emitting alternate short and long tones of reedy timbre. When the guests began to gather at the foot of the ladder, a boy was there with a jar of water from which he sprinkled the feet of each one as he ascended into the house. Shouts of "traw le-o, traw le-o" mingled with the notes of the horns as the groom advanced to the doorway of his bride's parents. Here he was met by two young men, neither of whom had lost a parent (such is the requirement of the occasion), who poured the contents of two bamboo water joints over him, completely drenching him. They then assisted him to don the new garments provided for him by his betrothed.[6] The din produced by the merry-makers by no means ceased when they had entered the house. Indeed, it only seemed to increase, being punctuated now and then with a shout which served as a signal for the crowd to jump up and down on the plain bamboo floor, shaking the whole building until it seemed ready to collapse.

Meanwhile, the bride had long since retired into obscurity in a rear room. Any glimpse of her called forth all the noise the crowd was capable of. In Karen weddings, as in most Oriental nuptials, the bride keeps herself in the background as much as possible. I once asked to see the bride at a wedding on the plains and was told that she was back in the darkest part of the room. I remember that I gazed intently, but was not able to discern her.

The groom in his wedding-array occupied himself in cutting in two-yard lengths a long piece of white muslin and distributing these for turbans to the male relatives of the bride. On request the chief of the village permitted the young men to visit the different rooms of the village-house, for the purpose of merry-making under such restrictions as he saw fit to impose. After that they quieted down for the remainder of the day, spending most of their time in chewing betel, telling stories, and amusing themselves in other ways. Many of them went apart into a room to sleep, having had little rest the night before.

When a wedding is about to take place in a village nearly all the young women of the place disappear, leaving the day before the event for a visit to another village or retiring into the jungle. The

[6] Dr. Mason tells us that it was the custom for the bride to be conducted to the groom's house and to be there drenched with water: *Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1866.

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KAREN GIRLS OF THE PLAINS, THAYAWADDY DISTRICT
They have put on their best and brought out their umbrellas and handkerchiefs for display.

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CHRISTIAN CONVERTS, HEAVY EN VILLAGE, THAYAWADDY DISTRICT
A village near the plains, shows the combination of Karen and Burmese costumes.

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Photo by Dr. Bunker

A Bwe Karen Prophet

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A Hut Erected in a Forest Clearing by a Self-styled Prophet as the Center of a New Karen Religious Cult of Short Duration

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good order. At length the Karen National Association ("Daw k' lu," meaning literally "the whole race") was organized. All the districts in which the Karen live were represented at its first meet-

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REV. THRA' MAUNG YIN, OF BASSEIN
He held the rank of honorary havildar in the Karen battalion of the Burma Rifles, 1917-1920, and was most highly commended by his commanding officers for his wholesome influence as a religious teacher.

ing, a few non-Christians attending, although the leaders were Christians. The aim of the association was simply to promote the economic and educational interests of the people, as well as to plan for their representation at public functions, such as on the occasion of viceregal visits. Funds have been raised for these purposes, but,

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wives and daughters, and rendered an important service to the Government, the fruits of which have not yet disappeared. After all their long suffering and patient endurance this experience was a hard one, to which they should not have been subjected.[11]

KAREN MILITARY POLICE
These men were a part of a squad who shot some notorious dacoits in the Insein District, 1917. They are all from Toungoo District.

Meantime, a battalion of the Karen Military Police had been organized and was rendering service to the Government. It remained a separate unit until 1899. At that time an unfortunate affair, in which liquor played a prominent part, resulted in the dispersion of the battalion, the companies that were retained being sent into different sections of the province. These surviving companies have not failed to give a good account of themselves, for example, in scattering within the last few years the dacoits in the Okkan region of the Insein district and also in the Bassein district.

[11] This statement is based on correspondence between members of the American Baptist Mission and the Secretary to the Government carried on at the time.